OTF/FEO Interaction ... on line

To be copied and shared with all members

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A Message from the President

Barbara Sargent

Fellow Teachers,
As we are all aware, we are turning a page in the history of education with the coming of the new millennium. With this excitement comes the anticipation of putting the past behind us as we plunge ahead toward a new and proud beginning for teachers in this province.

It is in the same breath that I share with you the sense of pride, pleasure and a great sense of honour that I feel as I prepare to serve you, my colleagues, as the President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, especially as we approach this historic cornerstone.

We can no longer think, organize or act following the same paradigm we have over the past 50 years. We must examine how we deliver programs and how we communicate to our members. It is necessary to rebuild and ensure that OTF is allowed to take the initiative to work collaboratively, among all Affiliates and with other partners, to develop and articulate a vision of the future of quality public education which will serve well our students and our teachers in Ontario.

Minister of Education Janet Ecker, newly appointed, and apparently fresh with ideas of dialogue, consultation and discussion with teachers, provides an opportunity which we as problem-solvers and solution-makers must attempt to nurture. While we are by nature and experience suspicious of the government, we are only strong if we demonstrate the courage to take risks and follow a different path than the one we have had to follow most recently. We must articulate what it is we want our schools to be and what we want for the future of public education rather than continue to shout out what it is we don't like or want.

Our intent is to ensure that our vision of education in Ontario is foremost during our consultations with government, community and other educational partners. It is a priority that OTF continue to build its credibility and its influence so that it is recognized as the leader in forging solutions to education issues on the provincial level. We must toil together as Affiliates and provide a strong, unified foundation on which to place the building blocks that our teachers and students need for a safe and positive learning environment. After all, a building is only as strong as its foundation.

I look forward to working with you this year as together we shape the future for our teachers and our students. Please keep in touch with me. You can email me at

otfprez@otffeo.on.ca.

Sincerely,

Barbara Sargent
President

The OTF Executive met on August 23 and 27, 1999. Some of the issues discussed are outlined below.

Teacher Education

The Executive received a report from a joint meeting of the OTF Work Group on the College of Teachers and the Teacher Education Staff Work Group. The two groups met to look at the issues of the government's proposal for teacher testing and the College of Teachers' document, Consultation: Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession - April 1999. The two work groups presented a thorough and well-researched report. Following extensive discussion, the Executive referred the report to the Affiliates for study and report back to the September Executive.

We're Moving

Due to the sale of the building at 1260 Bay Street, the offices of the Ontario Teachers' Federation will be moving at the end of the year. Our new address will be:

1300 Yonge Street
Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1X3

OTF Committees

The Executive approved the appointments of the chairs of the OTF Committees for 1999-2000.

1999-2000 OTF Committees

Budget and Finance Committee	Roger Régimbal (First Vice-President)
International Assistance	Norman Dubé (AEFO)
Legislation	Malcolm Buchanan (OSSTF)
OTF/Affiliate Curriculum Forum	Peter Lipman (OSSTF)
Pension	Lorraine Stewart (ETFO)

Relations and Discipline	Guill Archambault (AEFO)
Resolutions	Rich Prophet (OECTA)
Retirement Planning Workshop	Rachelle Chrétien (AEFO)
Roy C. Hill TVO	Diane Gervais (AEFO)
Teacher Education	Linus Shea (OECTA)

College of Teachers

Liz Barkley reported on the status of the next election for the Governing Council of the College of Teachers. The elections were to take place in February 2000. The election needs to take place under legislative regulation, a regulation which needs to be amended by Order in Council of the Provincial Cabinet. Currently, the Minister of Education has two sets of draft regulations. One would set out the guidelines for the new election. The other would extend the term of the current Councillors by six months and delay the election. There is some feeling at the College of Teachers that there is not enough time for a February election, hence the extension. The OTF Executive feels there is plenty of time, and has asked the Minister to proceed with the election. This election is of particular importance for teachers because of the change in the composition of the elected members of the Governing Council. Teachers were entitled to elect 14 of the councillors. Since Bill 160 excluded Principals and Vice-Principals from Federation, and due to some job changes since the last election, there are now only eight teachers on the Council.

This issue now rests with the Minister of Education. You may want to write to her to encourage her to hold the elections as scheduled for February 2000.

Annual Board of Governors' Meeting

The Board of Governors met from August 24 to August 27.

New Executive

Barbara Sargent, a classroom teacher from Chatham, was elected the 56th President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) at the Annual Board of Governors' Meeting in Alliston, Ontario.

Sargent, who is a graduate of the Windsor Teachers' College and the University of Windsor, has been a teacher for 20 years. She is an elementary teacher who specializes in music and has served in the past as principal. She has been a member of the Board of Governors since 1988 and on the Executive since 1992.

Also elected at the same meeting were:

1999-2000 Executive

First Vice-President	Roger Régimbal, Ottawa
Second Vice-President	Susan Swackhammer, Bramford
Third Vice-President	Pearse Shannon, Hamilton

Past President Mike Walsh, Windsor

Strategic Framework

The goal of our strategic plan is to build support for an excellent publicly supported education system. It is a plan with short and long term goals - up to the election, through the election, and after the election.

OTF and the Affiliates have learned throughout the 18 months we spent developing the strategic plan that we must have dual priorities in teacher organizations-that of supporting and improving quality public education and that of defending our students and our members.

We must have a shared public understanding of the requirements of excellence in education. We need to create a shared alternative vision of the future of public education. We cannot meet our priority goals without forging links to the community.

In order to start to forge those links, under the banner of OTF we have instituted a series of community forums. We have invited people from a cross-section of the population to come and talk about our schools. In the London area, we have held three forums - one in Ingersoll, one in St. Thomas and one in London itself. We have also held forums in Orillia, Owen Sound, Waterloo and Durham.

We as teachers are listening to what is being said in those meetings.

There are more forums in the planning stages. Convincing our families, our neighbours and indeed our colleagues that ensuring quality public education is the most important thing we can do for our future.

If you're interested in exploring the possibility of holding a community forum in your neighbourhood, contact your colleagues in the other Affiliates and just get started. You will get the support you need from OTF. You can contact Ruth Baumann at the OTF offices at ruth.baumann@otffeo.on.ca.

The Governors spent time at the Annual Meeting listening to, and discussing with a series of guest speakers and forum participants in the community forums, the next steps in our strategic plan.

Hugh Segal, President of the Institute for Research on Public Policy, spoke to the Governors about the tasks we face as a profession. He challenged us to find a clear description of the 'public good' education constitutes. He advised us to reach out and broaden our base of support for public education. He warned us not to make the mistake of fighting the last campaign.

The Governors also heard from a panel of people who have been involved in some of the community forums held so far.

Diane Bell parent, school council
Rachel MacMillan OAC student
Dave McLeod parent, town councillor
Rev. Cannon Christopher Pratt clergy and parent
Karen Taylor-Harrison parent, city councillor

The common message from the panel members - "This is a great idea. It is an energizing experience. Keep at it."

The final speaker was Michel Agnaïeff, President, Canadian Commission for UNESCO. Michel, as the former Secretary-General of CEQ - the Quebec education union - was able to bring into focus the concept of the two pillars on which teachers' federations are balanced. These two pillars are the professional advancement of education as a shared public good and the protectionist role of the unionist.

At their next meeting, the OTF Executive will detail the next steps in the implementation of the Strategic Framework. Watch the OTF website for the next edition of Interaction on line following the September 25th meeting.

Teacher Recognition Awards

The Board of Governors viewed the TVO produced video of the TVOntario Teacher of the Year Award winners for 1999. The winners were Judith Sincennes-Guertin, an elementary teacher from Ecole Saint-Hugues in Sarsfield, Ontario; Paul Delaney from Victoria Harbour Elementary School; and Dave Noble a music teacher from Campbellford District High School.

Pictured above from L to R: Jan McPhail, Acting Chair, TVOntario; Judith Sincennes-Guertin; Paul Delaney; Dave Noble; and Veronica Lacey, former Deputy Minister of Education

Unhappily, the Awards Committee also announced an end to the Roy C. Hill Awards. The foundation, which financed this excellent award for classroom teachers, gave the required notice two years ago that 1999 would be the last year that the foundation would participate.

Since that time, CTF has been searching for a partner to ensure the

program would continue. They hired a firm to assist with this search - GPC Communications. Several possible partners were identified, but to date, a new sponsor has not been found.

CTF remains hopeful that a new mechanism can be found to establish a program designed to recognize and celebrate the excellence with the teaching profession in schools across Canada. Over the past 30 years the Roy C. Hill Awards Program has been an important vehicle to both promote and publicize excellence within the teaching profession. The teachers who receive the awards represent the profession as a whole, and all of the profession basks in their achievements. Roy C. Hill Awards were peer reviewed and the public acknowledgement of one's peers is always a morale booster for any professional. It is a loss for us all that we have been unable to find a suitable sponsor for these national awards.

Curriculum Summer Institutes

The Governors heard a report on the highly successful Curriculum Summer Institutes which were organized by OTF and the anglophone Affiliates. The Institutes were funded by $1.7 million from the Ministry of Education. Over 4400 teachers - 2600 from the elementary panel and 1800 from the secondary panel - took part in this teachers teaching teachers program.

Teachers who took part in these institutes were overwhelming in their appreciation.....

> "I am so excited... now I and others and will actually get to try some of the stuff you have taught us."
>
> "... just wanted to say thanks again for the great course. I am still buzzing!"
>
> "I can hardly wait to sit down and take my time to re-read and go through everything."
>
> "Thank You to the north we don't have access to conferences, workshops, etc., during the year or even in the summer. This is the only time for many of us that we can take the courses."
>
> "I thoroughly enjoyed every moment. One of the best courses I've taken. It's all going to be used immediately in my class."
>
> "This is my first summer course. Thank you for supporting us with this type of professional development."

Minister of Education

The still new Minister of Education, Janet Ecker, addressed the Governors. As the President reports in her letter, the Minister was

"apparently fresh with ideas of dialogue, consultation and discussion with teachers."

OTF Fellowships

The Governors of the Ontario Teachers' Federation welcomed nine new Fellows. The Board of Governors established Fellowships in OTF in 1964 to acknowledge service to the teaching profession and to Federation. This year's honourees are:

- Betty-Ann Bushell, a retired teacher who was honoured for a career of commitment to education and teachers;
- Diane Chénier, a teacher from Timmins who is a Vice-President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, was acknowledged for her work in Federation;
- Brad Kuhn, an Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario staff member, was made a Fellow for his work in creating professional development courses for teachers;
- Greg Pollock of the staff of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, for his work in Federation on behalf of teachers;
- Daniel Racine, a classroom teacher from Rockland, Ontario, for his commitment to improving special education;
- Pearse Shannon, an Executive member of OTF, was honoured for his work in Federation on behalf of teachers;
- Lorraine Stewart of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, was named a Fellow for her career-long work on behalf of equity in education and the profession;
- Sondra Nesterenko, a classroom teacher who was honoured posthumously; and
- Peter Herrndorf, head of the National Arts Centre and former Chair of TVOntario. The Governors elected Peter as a Fellow for his support of teachers and publicly funded education through the programming of Ontario's public broadcaster.

Pictured above from L to R: Pearse Shannon; Betty Anne Bushell; Greg Pollock; Lorraine Stewart; Brad Kuhn; Diane Chénier; Peter Herrndorf; and Daniel Racine

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